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INFORMED CONSENT: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TREATMENT

Mid-State Health Center (MSHC) believes in an Integrated Care Model. This means that your medical care team and your Behavioral Health Providers (BHP) will work together to help you reach your treatment goals, using a shared medical record. An Integrated Care model is different from specialty Mental Health treatment. Integrated Care treatment is typically short term and problem focused. If either you or the BHP determines that your needs are best met through specialty mental health then a referral can be made.

I. LICENSE AND CODE OF ETHICS: All BHP at MSHC are licensed to practice in the state of New Hampshire. Information relating to BHP training, qualifications and experience is available upon request.

II. MENTAL HEALTH BILL OF RIGHTS: The New Hampshire Mental Health Bill of Rights provides patients with certain rights. A copy of the Mental Health Bill of Rights is posted in the waiting area.

III. DIAGNOSIS AND RECOMMENDED TREATMENT: As part of your treatment, your BHP will discuss your diagnosis and proposed treatment plan, including goals that are developed together. Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy can involve discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, psychotherapy has been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Therapy often leads to better relationships, better health, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. Every experience is unique and there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

You should be aware that there are alternative types of services to those being offered at MSHC. You may prefer to obtain counseling from a different provider or at a different location. You also have the choice not to obtain any counseling services. There are also risks and benefits associated with alternatives and with not pursuing any counseling.

In some cases, patients are involved with a BHP for assessment rather than treatment. Examples might include, referrals for pre-surgical psychological evaluations and evaluations of cognitive functioning. If your BHP is providing a psychological evaluation which may include psychological testing, your BHP will explain the nature and purpose of the assessment procedures, and how the results of the assessment will be communicated to you and to other appropriate parties such as the referring provider. Any communication with outside parties requires the patient's written authorization.

IV. CONFIDENTIALITY: Under New Hampshire law, communications between a patient and a licensed BHP are considered confidential and may not be disclosed without the expressed authorization of the patient, except under specific and limited circumstances, such as:

- The individual is a danger to themselves or others;
- Treatment is relating to a workers' compensation claim;
- Audit by regulatory authorities; and
- Receipt of a valid court order.

In addition to the above, as part of maintaining a valid license to practice, BHP's are required to regularly discuss therapy cases with colleagues. Your BHP may also obtain professional supervision that is intended to improve your care. In both of these situations, the identity of a patient is not disclosed and all other health professionals are also legally obligated to maintain confidentiality.

V. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS: The State of New Hampshire has reporting laws that require licensed BHPs to report, to the appropriate authorities, certain types of conduct: 1.) Allegations or suspicion of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child or incapacitated adult by a patient; and 2.) to warn the police or likely victims of a patient's "serious threat of physical violence" to a person or property.

VI. PARENTS OF MINORS: Treatment of a minor child (under the age of 18) must be authorized by both biological parents and/or legal guardian(s). Parental control over a minor's treatment includes the authority to access or release the child's otherwise confidential treatment records. Even parents without residential responsibility for a child retain decision-making authority over the child's treatment and treatment records unless a court has ordered otherwise.

It is our policy to treat minors only with the consent of both parents, to the extent both are available. If both are available but cannot reach agreement about treatment and access to records, it is the responsibility of the parents to resolve their differences through a court hearing prior to instituting treatment, and to provide MSHC with a copy of the court's order.

If one parent is unavailable and we determine that it is appropriate to proceed with the consent of only one parent, the absent parent will have a right to the child's treatment records upon request while the child is a minor unless there is a court order to the contrary. If continuation of treatment becomes an issue, it is the responsibility of the parents to resolve the disagreement in court.

In New Hampshire, all information regarding your child's therapy file is considered privileged and therefore can only be released in limited circumstances. If there is a dispute about whether your child's privileged records should be released, the court must determine what is in the child's best interests. It is your responsibility to ensure that this issue is brought to the court's attention. Your child's therapist will not be able to provide therapy records or information to anyone until the court has determined what is in the child's best interest, and you provide MSHC with a copy of the court's order.

Upon turning 18, the child gains control over treatment, information and records.

VII. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: There are times when actual or potential conflicts of interest may arise. In the event that your BHP become aware of a conflict of interest in providing treatment to you, the BHP may be required to refer you to another provider. Regardless of the existence of a conflict of interest, you can be assured that any information will remain confidential.

VIII. PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES: Licensed psychotherapists are obligated to establish and maintain appropriate professional boundaries (relationships) with present or past patients (and, in some cases, patient's family members). For example, therapists should not socialize or become friends with patients and should never become sexually involved with a patient.

IX. CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS: If you have any complaints about the treatment you have received, you should not hesitate to raise them with your provider. You may also contact:

- Mid-State Health Center's Compliance Office at 603-536-4000;
- New Hampshire Board of Mental Health Practice at 603-271-2702; or
- New Hampshire Board of Psychologists at 603-271-6745.

X. LIMITS OF SERVICE: Unless specifically agreed to otherwise, the role of the BHP is to provide psychotherapy services, not to assess fitness for custody, serve as an advocate, or act as an expert witness.

